

Native American companies receive economic development grants

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High Water Mark, LLC of Cochiti Pueblo; the Ohkay Owingeh Housing Authority; Professional Cleaning Solutions of Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo; Tano Services of Pojoaque Pueblo; Than Povi Gallery of San Ildefonso Pueblo; and Walatowa Timber of Jemez Pueblo will receive a total of \$60,000 under this year's Native American Venture Acceleration Fund (VAF).

The grants, which are funded by Los Alamos National Security, LLC and managed by the [Regional Development Corporation](#) in Española, are designed to help increase recipients' revenue base, create jobs and diversify pueblo economies.

Phoebe Suina, a Dartmouth-educated environmental engineer specializing in water issues, is pleased to have her company among this year's winners. "My business partner, Ryan Weiss, and I really appreciate having High Water Mark join the Native American VAF awardees," Suina said. "The money will help us purchase Geographic

Information System and Flo2D licenses plus much-needed computer hardware and software.”

Suina and Weiss founded their majority Native American, woman-owned business in August 2013 to support northern New Mexico with water resource planning, watershed and floodplain management, flood hazard mitigation and post-fire flood damage assessment and repair. In the brief time of its existence, the company already has provided water-related assistance to the Cochiti, Jemez, Nambe, San Felipe, San Ildefonso and Santo Domingo Pueblos; the village of Pecos; the Pojoaque Valley Irrigation District; and private engineering and planning firms.

“I am particularly proud of having helped northern New Mexico tribes and communities secure over \$24 million in funding,” Suina explained, “and keeping most of the revenue for procured products and services inside our region.”

Suina, who is of Cochiti and San Felipe Pueblo descent, began her professional relationship with Cochiti Pueblo right after the Las Conchas Fire in 2011. “The fire reduced 150,000 acres to ash,” Suina noted, “and then it rained. With no vegetation to restrain them, water and mudslides raced down the mountains and threatened communities in their paths, including Cochiti.”

Suina knocked on the door of Cochiti Pueblo’s governor and offered her services. After checking local conditions and running some analyses and future projections, she proposed a series of flood mitigation measures to deflect the floodwaters of small- and medium-sized rainstorms away from the pueblo. “If big floodwaters were headed toward Cochiti,” Suina recalled, “the berms would at least slow them enough to give people a chance to evacuate.”

High Water Mark’s current Cochiti projects include long-term planning for what can be done with Cochiti Dam and Reservoir once the human-made lake will be filled with sediment. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the reservoir already has lost about a third of its storage capacity to silt.

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